



ALBANIA: ISSUES RELATED TO IMMIGRATION DETENTION

**SUBMISSION TO THE UN COMMITTEE
AGAINST TORTURE**

83rd SESSION, NOVEMBER 2025

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ABOUT THE GLOBAL DETENTION PROJECT (GDP)

The Global Detention Project (GDP) is committed to ending arbitrary and harmful migration-related detention practices around the world, and to ensuring respect for the fundamental human rights of all migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. To achieve this, we seek to:

- Increase public knowledge and awareness of immigration detention policies.
- Expand coverage of immigration detention by human rights monitoring bodies and other international agencies.
- Expand partnerships with local and international civil society organisations working to end arbitrary and harmful immigration detention practices.
- Strategically target research and advocacy so that it effectively challenges arbitrary and harmful detention laws and policies.

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The Global Detention Project (GDP) welcomes the opportunity to provide information relevant to the review of Albania's Start Party Report during the 83rd Session of the Committee against Torture (CAT). This submission focuses on the country's immigration detention laws and policies, including its collaboration with Italy in detaining third-country migrants deported by its neighbour.

1. MIGRATION CONTEXT

Since the fall of the Albanian Communist Party in 1991, Albania has gained a reputation as a country of emigration. Significant numbers left the country soon after the regime collapsed amidst political instability and economic crash, and again following the collapse of several pyramid investment schemes in 1997. According to the country's 2023 census, published in July 2024, the country's population shrank by 14 percent in 12 years (from approximately 2.8 million to around 2.4 million).¹

At the same time, however, Albania has increasingly become an important transit country for many migrants and asylum seekers attempting to reach the EU via the Western Balkans—with a significant number entering irregularly from Greece. In light of this, the country has been a particular focus for “border outsourcing” efforts by the EU. In 2018 for example, the EU and Albania signed a Status Agreement (which entered into force on 1 May 2019) allowing for the deployment of Frontex teams—with Frontex quickly thereafter deploying 50 officers from EU states to the Albania-Greece border and the Adriatic Sea to control migratory flows. This was its first full-fledged joint operation outside the EU.² The arrangement was significantly enhanced in September 2023 by way of a revised status agreement granting Frontex broader powers and scope within Albania.³

The actions of both Frontex officers and Albanian border guards along the country's border with Greece has drawn significant criticism. Testimonies collected by the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) for example, reveal officers denying arrivals the right to apply for violence and arbitrarily pushing them back across the border—with individuals reporting being beaten with batons and kicked during the process, before being left abandoned between Albania and Greece.⁴ In 2025, Frontex's Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights also noted concerning practices including the returns of people to Greece without

¹ Ekathimerini, “Results of Albanian Census Stir Tensions in the Region,” 4 July 2024, <https://www.ekathimerini.com/politics/foreign-policy/1243158/results-of-albanian-census-stir-relations-in-the-region/>

² Frontex, “Frontex Launched First Operation in Western Balkans,” 21 May 2019, <https://www.frontex.europa.eu/media-centre/news/news-release/frontex-launches-first-operation-in-western-balkans-znTNWM#>

³ European Council, “Council Will Sign Agreement with Albania on Frontex Cooperation,” 8 September 2023, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/09/08/council-will-sign-agreement-with-albania-on-frontex-cooperation/>

⁴ Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN), “Surveillance Technologies at European Borders: Assessment of Albania,” 2024, <https://borderviolence.eu/app/uploads/ALBANIA-bordertech.pdf>

removal orders; the placement of unaccompanied children alongside unrelated adults in reception centres; and the reliance upon self-declaration for age-assessments.⁵

In 2021, Albania introduced the **Law on Asylum (No. 10/2021)**, replacing the previous Law No 121/2014 on Asylum. According to this law, someone entering Albania can lodge an application for international protection at the border or at a police station. According to the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN), however, the country's asylum system is "largely inaccessible to people entering the country." In 28 percent of the testimonies collected by BVMN, "individuals asked for asylum by were pushed back to Greece regardless."⁶

In 2025, a joint initiative funded by the EU and implemented by UNHCR and IOM was launched in the country, aimed at strengthening Albania's asylum and migration systems in line with EU and international standards, supporting the country's EU accession process.^{7 8}

2. THE DETENTION OF MIGRANTS, REFUGEES, AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

2.1 Legislation

Albania's legal framework for immigration detention is primarily provided by **Law No. 79/2021 "On Aliens,"** which regulates the entry, stay, and exist of foreigners. Under this law, non-nationals can be detained in order to effect removal. Article 115(3) also provides that "the regional State authority responsible for dealing with aliens may hold an alien in a closed reception centre on grounds of public safety, identity or unclear motives of stay."

Albanian legislation does not protect vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors from detention. Instead, Article 119(1) and (2) note that they can be subject to detention orders and placed in a closed reception centre.

2.2 Detention Conditions

Albania operates one dedicated immigration detention centre—the Karreç Detention Centre, about 20km northwest of Tirana. The centre currently has capacity for 100 people.⁹

Article 14 of Law No. 79/2021 states that "a closed reception centre shall meet all the conditions for a humane and decent treatment and shall ensure provision of health services and safeguarding of the individual fundamental rights." In its reply to the committee's List of Issues, Albania also notes that Karreç detention centre meets "standard living conditions," and that "all efforts are made to ensure normal living conditions, freedoms, and rights for all foreigner nationals during their stay at the center."

⁵ Frontex Consultative Forum on Fundamental Rights, "Twelfth Annual Report 2024," 2025, https://www.frontex.europa.eu/assets/fundamental/Twelfth_Annual_Report_2024_Frontex_CF.pdf

⁶ Border Violence Monitoring Network, "Surveillance Technologies at European Borders: Assessment of Albania," 2024, <https://borderviolence.eu/app/uploads/ALBANIA-bordertech.pdf>

⁷ UNHCR, "EU4Migration in Albania," <https://www.unhcr.org/europe/eu4migration-albania>

⁸ For more on Albania, see: Global Detention Project, "Albania Country Page," <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/albania>

⁹ See: Global Detention Project, "Kareç Detention Centre (Karreç)," <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/countries/europe/albania/detention-centres/1838/karec-detention-centre-karrec>

However, despite these assurances, the Global Detention Project has documented numerous reports highlighting conditions concerns in the facility in recent years.

- In **November 2018**, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) visited the facility and noted "deliberate physical ill-treatment (such as slaps or punches)"; "appalling hygienic conditions"; access to outside space on only a few days per month; officers unable to communicate with detainees; isolation cells in poor state of repair; and foreign nationals being "handcuffed to the bed inside a security cell," and that in "at least one case, a foreign national had allegedly been hand- and ankle-cuffed to the bed in a stress position (spread-eagled) for 24 hours"—something the CPT noted could be considered to amount to inhuman and degrading treatment.¹⁰
- In **February 2022**, the Ombudsman (*Avokat i Popullit* – designated the National Preventive Mechanism) inspected the facility and reported numerous issues including: lack of specialist staff such as physicians and dentists; difficulties faced by detainees in contacting the outside world due to a lack of telephones; absence of translators; insufficient provisions of recreational activities; lack of easily accessed information about detainees' legal entitlements; lack of alarms in bedrooms.¹¹
- In **January 2024**, the Ombudsman conducted another visit, and noted staff shortages (including social workers, legal advisors, interpreters), "directly impacting the rights of irregular foreign nationals," visibility of "force-related objects" in areas managed by police staff, "causing psychological violence against residents"; deficiencies in maintenance; ongoing problems with food quality and variety; absence of emergency call bells in bedrooms; damp; poor hygiene.¹²

Testimonies collected by the Border Violence Monitoring Network (BVMN) also point to the use of Closed Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centres along the border for brief ad hoc detention prior to pushbacks, as well as a police station in Durrës port. According to the BVMN, from January 2021 the organisation has documented an "emerging trend" of hotel raids by Albanian authorities in the port city of Durrës, whereby police raid low-cost accommodation known to house migrants and detain people in a station at the port. "One respondent stated that several people were beaten by uniformed men inside the cells, using their hands to punch them as well as batons."¹³

While the state party notes in its reply to the List of Issues that in accordance with Law No 79/2021 non-nationals are held in the closed centre for six months to a maximum of one year, in November 2022 the Albanian Ombudsman found that three Iraqi citizens remained detained in Karreç after two years, twice the legal maximum length of detention.¹⁴

¹⁰ Council of Europe, "Report to the Albanian Government on the visit to Albania carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) from 20 to 30 November 2018," September 2019, <https://rm.coe.int/168097986b>

¹¹ Avokat i Popullit, "Annual report on the Activity of the People's Advocate in 2022," <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/PA%20Annual%20Report%202022%20final%20%281%29.pdf>

¹² Border Violence Monitoring Network, "Surveillance Technologies at European Borders: Assessment of Albania," 2024, <https://borderviolence.eu/app/uploads/ALBANIA-bordertech.pdf>

¹³ Border Violence Monitoring Network, "Surveillance Technologies at European Borders: Assessment of Albania," 2024, <https://borderviolence.eu/app/uploads/ALBANIA-bordertech.pdf>

¹⁴ Avokat i Popullit, "Annual report on the Activity of the People's Advocate in 2022," <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/PA%20Annual%20Report%202022%20final%20%281%29.pdf>

3. ITALIAN MIGRANT CENTRES ON ALBANIAN SOIL

Albania also hosts two Italian-managed detention facilities: the [Gjadër Detention Centre](#) and the [Shëngjin Migrant Processing Center](#).

In November 2023, Italy and Albania agreed a bilateral protocol enabling Italy to establish and operate two detention and processing facilities on Albanian territory.¹⁵ Under this arrangement, persons intercepted at sea by Italian authorities, particularly adult males from countries deemed “safe,” were to be transferred to the Shëngjin Migrant Processing Center for processing (medical examinations, identification procedures, asylum registration, and identification of vulnerable individuals). Those “fit for detention” were to be transferred to Gjadër Detention Centre, where they would be held while a fast-track asylum procedure, based on the safe country of origin (SCoO) concept, was completed within 28 days. Those whose applications were approved were to be returned to Italy, while those who were rejected were to be swiftly processed for deported. According to the protocol, these facilities would come under Italian jurisdiction, with proceedings carried out in accordance with Italian law, and overseen by Italian personnel. However Albanian police would provide security and external surveillance.¹⁶

Speed lay at the heart of this scheme: asylum applications were to be processed quickly, with the SCoO concept employed to reject applications based purely on nationality and to limit the need for individual assessments as well as applicants’ right to appeal. However as of October 2025, the original function of these centres is on hold in the wake of an August 2025 European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruling which held that under EU law, SCoO designations must remain subject to judicial review, and applicants must be allowed to challenge the presumption based on their own individual circumstances.¹⁷ Instead, in March Italian authorities approved a decree to repurpose the Gjadër centre into a repatriation hub for persons whose asylum requests have been rejected or deemed inadmissible in Italy, and who are awaiting deportation.¹⁸

Albania’s facilitation of Italian-managed migrant detention centres on its territory raises serious concerns regarding its compliance with obligations under the Convention as well as with respect to accountability and responsibility vis-à-vis the treatment of detainees. The CAT has previously issued important findings in similar cases, including importantly in the *Marine I* case regarding Spain’s agreement with Mauritania to detain interdicted migrants in

¹⁵ Odysseus Network, “Translation: Protocol Between the Government of the Italian Republic and the Council of Ministers of the Albanian Republic,” 2023, <https://odysseus-network.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Protocol-between-the-Government-of-the-Italian-Republic-and-the-Council-of-Minister-of-the-Albanian-Republic-1-1.pdf>

¹⁶ Mediterranean Migration and Asylum Policy Hub, “Offshoring Migration – Risking Rights: The Italy-Albania Migration Protocol in the EU’s Externalization Playbook,” November 2024, <https://med-ma.eu/publications/offshoring-migration-risking-rights-the-italy-albania-migration-protocol-in-the-eus-externalization-playbook/>

¹⁷ European Court of Justice, “Judgement of the Court (Grand Chamber) in Joined Cases C-758/24 [Alace] and C-759/24 [Canpelli],” 1 August 2025, <https://curia.europa.eu/juris/document/document.jsf?text=&docid=303022&pageIndex=0&doclang=EN&mode=lst&dir=&occ=first&part=1&cid=12406133>

¹⁸ Majcher, I. “The EU and the Externalisation of Migration and Asylum: An Analysis of Potential Human Rights Violations and Legal Responsibility,” *Heinrich Böll Foundation*, September 2025, <https://gr.boell.org/sites/default/files/2025-09/the-eu-and-the-externalisation-of-migration-and-asylum.pdf>

a facility in Mauritania.¹⁹ Such cases have underscored the shared responsibility of all state parties in externalised immigration detention arrangements.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the above information, the Global Detention Project encourages the committee to urge Albania to:

- Ensure that any deprivation of liberty, including de facto detention at the border or in police stations, is based on an individual legal assessment of each case and is subject to judicial review.
- Ensure that deprivation of liberty is only used as a measure of last resort, when determined to be strictly necessary and proportionate in the light of an individual's circumstance and for as short a period as possible.
- Amend national legislation to ensure vulnerable groups such as unaccompanied minors are protected from detention.
- Take urgent steps to ensure that conditions in facilities where migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers are detained meet international standards.
- Immediately cease the conduct of pushbacks, and ensure that any removal of a person from the country is subject to judicial order and review.
- Publish regularly updated and disaggregated statistics on the number of people who are detained for migration-related reasons.
- Remind the State Party that even though it has outsourced detention facilities to Italy for immigration detention reasons, it is equally responsible for any violations committed against these detainees during detention and removal proceedings taking place on its territory.

¹⁹ Flynn, M. "There and Back Again: On the Diffusion of Immigration Detention," *Journal on Migration and Human Security*, 2014, <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/there-and-back-again-on-the-diffusion-of-immigration-detention>